

The University of Dublin
Trinity College

Minutes of Research Committee Meeting, 29 June 2006

- Present Ian Robertson (Dean of Research, DoR), Doris Alexander, Alison Donnelly, Jane Ohlmeyer, Grace Dempsey (Treasurer), Colm Kearney (Senior Lecturer), Dermot Kelleher, Marina Lynch, David Lloyd (Associate Dean of Research, ADoR)
- Apologies Patrick Prendergast (Dean of Graduate Studies), Philip Lane, Ryan Sheridan, Nigel Biggar, Brian Sweeney, Clive Williams (Bursar), Michael Coey, Khurshid Ahmad (Observer)
- In attendance Oonagh Kinsman

RS/05-06/52 Minutes of meeting held on 18 May 2006

The Minutes were approved and signed.

RS/05-06/53 Matters Arising from the Minutes

RS/05-06/31: Inputs on Service contracts and Contract Research Activity will be held over until the appointment of the new Director of Research and Innovation Services in September 2006.

RS/05-06/47: The deadline for proposal submission for the Start-up Grant for New Lecturers has passed and proposals are being evaluated by members of the Committee.

RS/05-06/49: As a forerunner of the next National Research Plan, the Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation was published on 18 June 2006. It does not contain specifics on funding.

RS/05-06/51: The working group on FP7 will be set up when more information is available on the financial implications and overheads which may be claimed by universities which do not have a full cost accounting system. It was noted that for collaborative projects, a maximum of 75% of eligible costs including overheads may be reclaimed and that efforts to claim academic staff time on the projects will be required. Jane Ohlmeyer noted the useful *Introduction to FP7* workshops run by the Research Office for Schools in the Humanities and Social Sciences.

SECTION A: Policy/Implementation

RS/05-06/54 **Audit Committee Report on the Research Committee**

The report of the Joint Board-Audit Committee Working Group on Governance recommended that the role of Principal Committees should be confined to policy review and decision making on behalf of the Board. It suggested that other mechanisms should be used for policy formulation and as a communication channel to the College community. The Working Group suggested that the membership of the Research Committee be reduced to 10 with one in attendance. It was suggested to the Research Committee that a Research Planning Subcommittee be established with its membership drawn from the key research areas of College, and that this new Committee would provide a forum for the development of policy proposals which would then be considered by the Research Committee on behalf of Board prior to final policy proposals being submitted to Board for approval. The compromise suggested membership of the Research committee (eleven members plus three in attendance) was:

Dean of Research (Chair), Director of Research and Innovation (Secretary), Senior Lecturer or Bursar; Dean of Graduate Studies; two elected Board Members; one external Board Member; President of the Graduate Students' Union; two members of the Research Planning subcommittee, Head of School. In attendance: Nominee of the Treasurer, Research Development Officer, Associate Dean of Research.

The DoR expressed his concern that the proposed structure would be very cumbersome, requiring more meeting time, and he foresaw difficulties in practice. There was general agreement with this view. Comments were made from others on the quorum requirements and perceived difficulties in reaching this with the composition suggested. It was suggested that the Committee should appeal if possible. As the current Research Committee would have to be dissolved, it was suggested that the meeting dates reserved for 2006/07 could be allocated alternately to the new Research Committee and the Subcommittee.

The Senior Lecturer advised the meeting that governance issues, including clustering of academic Schools into Divisions, were being discussed at Board and that the outcome of any decisions may have an effect on the composition of the Research Committee. It was suggested that, as the original governance document for the Research Committee specified twelve members, this should be checked. It was pointed out by members of the Research Committee that the Board minutes of 10 March 2004 actually show 11 members plus one in attendance.

The DoR thanked all the existing Committee members for their contributions to date and will inform them in due course on the outcome of any changes to existing arrangements.

Action: The DoR will compose a response on behalf of the Research Committee, seek information on governance issues from Board, check the existing governance documentation and inform the existing members of any changes as required.

SECTION B: Implementation Decisions

RS/05-06/55 Trinity College Human Research Ethics Committee

The Board approved a document on 'Good Research Practice' in 2002 which included a recommendation for the establishment of a College ethics committee to oversee research on human subjects. A draft proposal for the formation of the Trinity Human Research Ethics Oversight System (THREO) was submitted for discussion. The system was comprised of three levels: a School level, at which a large number of research proposals can be approved according to 'fast track' criteria; a Thematic level, at which a broader panel of experts will be able to grant ethical approval to difficult or atypical cases; and an Oversight level which will not discuss particular cases but which will design appropriate instruments and processes for the other levels to use. The Thematic and Oversight Committee would contain lay members and specialist members in the area of ethics, law and statistics. Costs proposed for this activity included 0.5 FTE administrator for at least the first year, budget for recourse to legal/professional advice and training for members of the committees but no source of the budget has been identified. It was intended that the committees be established at the end of 2006 with guidelines and procedures in place by 2007.

Questions were asked about how the existing ethics committees in the hospitals would interact with the proposed committees. The DoR confirmed that there should be no duplication of effort and College would recognise the ethics committee decisions from the hospitals e.g. St James's and AMNCH. Any research involving patients at these hospitals would go through the hospital ethics committee.

The need for all Schools to have such an ethics committee was questioned as it may be possible for a grouping of Schools to undertake this activity. It was suggested that external representation is essential and the role of the School committee was queried as it is not proposed that lay members be included. However, there may be a significant volume of research, especially student projects, which includes human research. It may be possible to set a filter to ensure that the appropriate proposals progress to the Thematic Committee and that a template or ethical checklist could ensure this progression when appropriate. The Treasurer will be in discussion with insurers and other external parties on the issue of clinical trials, and useful feedback on the subject of ethics committees may be gained.

The DoR proposed that the draft proposal be reviewed again in the light of proposed new administrative structures and following discussion with external parties on clinical trials.

Action: The Treasurer will provide feedback on any useful outcomes from discussion on proposed clinical trials. The DoR will bring the item back for discussion next term.

RS/05-06/56 HEA PRTL

A call for a pre-proposal is expected in September 2006 with submission in November 2006. There is no information on the content of the call or whether it will include a capital component. The pre-proposal will concentrate on strategic areas within College, and the DoR has met with PIs who will lead submissions in a number of areas. The ADoR is coordinating the capital requirements for the Biosciences building. The Provost will make the final decision on what is to be included in the College's submission, taking into account the budget available.

The ADoR reported on progress on plans for the Bioscience building. Funding is sought through a Public /Private Partnership but a minimum of €30 million will be required and will form part of the PRTL bid. Planning permission will be submitted shortly. Financial estimates for recurrent costs, rental income, etc. are being reviewed by the Treasurer, the Bursar and the Director of Buildings. The capital costs of the PRTL bid will be requested for a Discovery Research Centre which could house initiatives in neuroscience, inflammation/infection and oncology, and some core platform technologies.

It was suggested that there should be connectivity between different programme bids being submitted at different times, e.g. the call for graduate schools from IRCHSS and IRCSET.

Action: The Dean of Graduate Studies will report back on any funding proposals for graduate schools.

RS/05-06/57 Start up Fund for New Lecturers

The deadline has passed and proposals are being evaluated. One proposal exceeded the budget maximum. Requests were made from Mathematics and Genetics departments that lecturers who have been appointed but have not started be allowed to submit proposals. However, it was agreed that they could be considered in the next round. Unfortunately, the scheme cannot be run in Michaelmas term as the core budget from the HEA will not be known until at least the end of January 2007 but consideration should be given to putting the call out earlier in the academic year pending budget decisions for the total to be distributed. Comments were made on technical aspects of the on-line submission which should be improved if used again. Some reviewers expressed a preference for a hard copy to review. Eligibility criteria could be reviewed for next year as currently eligibility includes those with three-year contracts who may leave before the aims of the start-up grant are achieved.

RS/05-06/58 Subcommittee: Business and Industry Committee

No issues were raised.

SECTION C: Items for Noting

RS/05-06/59 Research Capacity Building Scheme

This scheme has been launched with a deadline of 14 July 2006.

RS/05-06/59 Director of Entrepreneurship

Dr Eoin O'Neill will take up this position on 03 July 2006. The DoR wished him well in his new position. Martin Mullins will not take up the position of Director of Research and Innovation Services until 18 September 2006.

RS/05-06/60 Procedures for Appointing Exceptional External Candidates to Personal Chairs

These have been approved by Board and Council.

Signed:

Date: